

# COMPREHENSIVE PARK, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION PLAN

2015 - 2020

Section I - Executive Summary



---

THIS PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.

---

## Acknowledgements

The **City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Park, Open Space, and Recreation Plan: 2015-2020** was prepared by the City of Fitchburg Planning and Zoning and Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Departments with guidance and oversight provided by the following:

### City of Fitchburg Parks Commission

**Terra Theim** – Chair

**Jacob Johnson**  
**Karen Lawrence**  
**Andrew McClannahan**  
**Zyronia Mims**  
**Mark Vivian**  
**Eric Wilcots**

### City of Fitchburg Common Council

**Steve Arnold** – Mayor  
**Dan Carpenter** – Council President

**Julia Arata-Fratta**  
**Jason Gonzalez**  
**Tony Hartmann**  
**Jacob Johnson**  
**Dorothy Krause**  
**Carol Poole**  
**Patrick Stern**

### City of Fitchburg Plan Commission

**Steve Arnold** – Mayor/Chair

**Ron Johnson**  
**Ed Kinney**  
**Rachel Lee**  
**Tony McGrath**  
**Carol Poole**  
**Bill Tishler**

The City of Fitchburg Planning and Zoning and Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Departments gratefully acknowledge and thank the aforementioned, as well as all other participating stakeholders, including elected/appointed officials, City residents, and other interested parties, for their time and effort in development of the **City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Park, Open Space, and Recreation Plan: 2015-2020**. Special thanks to Ross Daniels and Abigail Jackson, both masters degree candidates in the University of Wisconsin – Madison Urban and Regional Planning Program, for providing information on community gardens and designing the *Plan* cover pages, respectively.

### City of Fitchburg Planning and Zoning Department

**Tom Hovel** – City Planner  
**Susan Badtke** – Community Planner  
**Wade Thompson** – Resource/Project Planner



### City of Fitchburg Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department

**Scott Endl** – Director  
**Johren Frydenlund** – Maintenance Supervisor  
**Anna Healy** – Urban Forester/Naturalist  
**Tony King** – Recreation Assistant  
**Chad Sigl** – Recreation Director

---

THIS PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.



## Executive Summary

### *What is the City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Park, Open Space and Recreation Plan: 2015 – 2020?*

The *City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Park, Open Space, and Recreation Plan: 2015 – 2020* (hereafter “*Plan*”) provides a holistic and integrated vision, and recommended action items to achieve that vision, for the City of Fitchburg park, open space, and recreation system (hereafter “*system*”) over a five-year period. This *Plan* is intended to guide and evaluate City decision-making as it relates to parks, open space, and recreation. As such, City *system* proposals and initiatives are to be consistent with this *Plan*. This *Plan* is a three-part document consisting of the following sections:

- **Section I – Executive Summary:** This section provides an introduction to and overview of the *Plan* and its Sections II and III.
- **Section II – Existing Conditions Report:** This section provides a contextual overview of various relevant existing conditions affecting Fitchburg’s *system*, including *system* stakeholder perceptions, classification and standards, assessment, inventory, and implementation tools. This section goes on to identify *system* “issues” as identified through analysis of the aforementioned existing conditions categories.
- **Section III – Action Items:** This section identifies City *system* goals and associated potential recommended action items to ensure sufficient maintenance and enhancement of Fitchburg’s *system* over the Plan horizon, 2015 to 2020.

The following provides further detail on *Plan* Sections II and III:

### *Section II – Existing Conditions Report*

This section provides a contextual overview of various relevant existing conditions affecting Fitchburg’s *system*, including *system* stakeholder perceptions, classification and standards, assessment, and inventory, and implementation tools. This section goes on to identify *system* “issues”, as identified through analysis of the aforementioned existing conditions categories.

### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System - Stakeholder Perceptions*

Fitchburg Planning and Zoning and Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Departments staff developed and coordinated a comprehensive public stakeholder participation process to ensure appropriate feedback and input during the *Plan* development process. Major components of this process included:

1. Presentation of overview of *Plan* development process to relevant City bodies;
2. Public opinion survey;
3. Public meeting and workshop;
4. Presentation of draft *Plan* to relevant City bodies and public;
5. Presentation of final *Plan* and *Plan* public hearing/adoption process (Public, relevant City bodies, and Common Council);



Major feedback components from the stakeholder participation process included the following:

- Expand the user profile of the City *system* through development of new recreational opportunities that reflect current trends and demands;
- Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships on City *system* properties;
- Accentuate Fitchburg's unique attributes, including trails/biking, natural resources, and agricultural lands, to enhance the City *system*;
- Ensure appropriate placement, size, and composition of new City *system* properties to derive maximum benefit;
- Ensure the multi-functional aspect of the City *system*, including both active and passive recreation opportunities,

#### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System – Classification and Standards*

Fitchburg utilizes classification categories for its *system* properties as follows:

- Community parks;
- Area parks;
- Neighborhood parks;
- Natural areas;
- Special-use areas;
- Trails/paths;
- Environmental management features (stormwater facilities and wetland buffers);

The City also utilizes standards to encourage desirable size, uses/facilities, and distribution of select *system* properties throughout the City.

#### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System – Assessment*

Fitchburg utilizes an assessment framework, for the following *system* components, to evaluate its *system* based on the aforementioned standards:

- Total parkland (Community, area, and neighborhood parks);
- Community parks;
- Area parks;
- Neighborhood parks;
- Recreation facilities;

The assessment indicates the City generally has adequate total parkland, and associated recreation facilities to serve its population, based on its current standards. However, a few notable *system* deficiencies do exist.

#### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System – Inventory*

Fitchburg's *system* consists of land and facilities as follows:

- 2 community parks, each approximately 60 acres or larger;
- 6 area parks;
- 23 neighborhood parks distributed throughout the City;
- 12 natural areas including marsh/wetland, prairie, and forested upland;
- 5 major bicycle/pedestrian trails/paths including 3 State trails, encompassing approximately 22 miles;

- 6 special-use areas including a community/senior center and 9-hole golf course;
- Numerous environmental management features including stormwater management facilities;
- Various recreation programs and services including classes, leagues, and outings;

#### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System – Implementation Tools*

Various tools, organized in to the following categories, are available to Fitchburg to potentially be utilized in maintaining and enhancing the City *system*, as well as implementing the recommended action items contained in Section III of this *Plan*:

- Regulatory;
- Acquisition;
- Funding;
- Inter-governmental cooperation;

#### *Park, Open Space, and Recreation System – Issues*

Fitchburg *system* issues were identified from an analysis of the previously identified existing conditions categories. Major issues are identified as follows:

- Future Park Uses;
- Future Park Sizes and Locations;
- Trails/Paths;
- New Recreation Programs and Services;
- User Groups;
- Upland Resources;
- Water Resources;
- Facility/Landscaping Maintenance and Improvement;
- Deficiencies;
- Past Uncompleted Initiatives;
- Governmental Partnerships;
- Financial Resources;

#### *Section III – Action Items*

This section identifies general *Plan* goals, and associated potential recommended action items, to ensure sufficient maintenance and enhancement of Fitchburg's *system* over the *Plan* horizon, 2015 to 2020. This section concludes identifying the *Plan* monitoring, updating, and amendment process, stipulating that the *Plan* should be updated every five years through a comprehensive public stakeholder participation process.

The *Plan* goals were developed from feedback gathered during the stakeholder participation process, goals, objectives, and policies contained in the 2010 – 2015 *Plan* update, and City staff expertise. *Plan* goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: Distribute** Fitchburg's park, open space, and recreation lands, and uses and facilities therein, in an accessible and equitable manner that reflects existing and future recreational demands and trends, and population demographics;
- Goal 2: Protect** Fitchburg's natural, cultural, and historical resources;
- Goal 3: Develop** Fitchburg's park, open space, and recreation lands, and uses and facilities therein, in a manner that provides identity and economic development opportunities for the City;

- Goal 4:** **Integrate** Fitchburg's park, open space, and recreation land, and uses and facilities therein, with a comprehensive City-wide trail/path system, stormwater management system, and environmentally sensitive area system;
- Goal 5:** **Provide** recreational program and services in an accessible and equitable manner that reflects existing and future recreational demands and trends, and population demographics;
- Goal 6:** **Manage** Fitchburg's park, open space, and recreational lands, and uses and facilities therein, in an efficient manner that optimizes benefit, minimizes cost, and provides for public safety;
- Goal 7:** **Serve** as the face of Fitchburg's park, recreation, and open space system through public interaction and service;

Recommended action items build on the aforementioned goals and were developed to address issues identified in Section II of the *Plan*. These action items are summarized as follows:

1. Designate **Signature Themed Parks** that focus on one or a few related uses and amenities at specific City system properties;
2. Develop **partnerships with private entities** that enhance and expand the user profile of the City system;
3. Explore revision of the City **system classification categories and standards, and parkland dedication and private open space requirements**;
4. Assist in development and implementation of a **comprehensive City trail/path plan and system**;
5. Continue discussion on a potential **neighborhood center in the North Fish Hatchery Road area**;
6. Encourage location of **community gardens** on specific City system properties;
7. **Explore opportunities for development of a "dog park" and related facilities**, at an existing City system property;
8. Explore opportunities for **addition of staff** within the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department to address specific City system and neighborhood needs;
9. **Design and landscape, and maintain and manage**, existing and future City system properties in a manner that adds value to the City and its system;
10. Strengthen **partnerships with other governmental entities** that own or manage outdoor recreation land or facilities, or provide outdoor recreation programs and services;
11. Maintain and enhance the City's **tree canopy, and forest and prairie landscapes**;
12. Maintain and enhance the City's **stormwater facilities and water-ways**;
13. Continue to explore opportunities for **new recreation programs and services**;
14. Monitor opportunities to implement **uncompleted City system concepts, initiatives, and projects**;
15. Explore opportunities for use of **"non-City" financial resources** to maintain and enhance the City system;